

RAISING THE BARN: SPRINGFIELD'S TOOL SHED

BY JIM BEDNAR & BONNIE J. FLADUNG
PHOTOS BY JIM BEDNAR, POUL HEILMANN & DAN SOULNIER

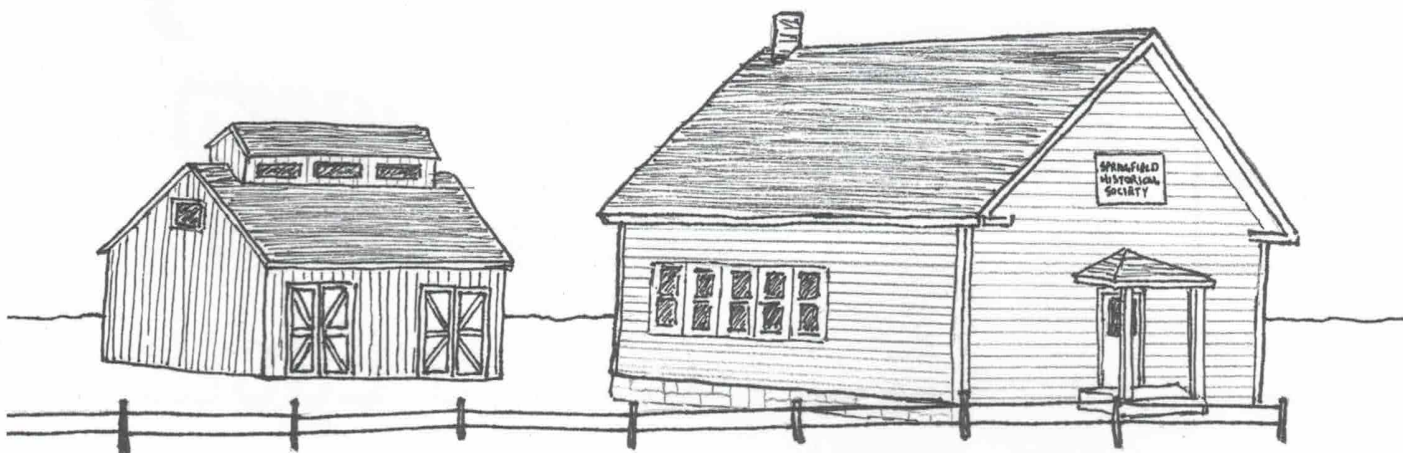
Some people say that Springfield's center is so small that you miss it if you blink. But the addition of a handsome post-and-beam barn has people stopping to admire its natural pine siding and sugarhouse cupola. The barn is the Springfield Historical Society's (SHS) new annex, constructed to display the town's agricultural heritage. The story of the old-fashioned barnraising highlights the talents of Springfield's special community.

In October 2020, the SHS hosted a NH Humanities lecture in the town's historic Meeting House – the first such gathering since the pandemic started. Some 30 people spread out in the hall to hear retired UNH faculty member John Porter describe the history and beauty of New Hampshire barns. At the same time, the SHS Board of Directors had been struggling with what to do with the growing collection of agricultural tools currently housed at the museum building. After Porter's talk, one board member remembered an old oil painting that showed the museum building with a barn next to it. So why not recreate that barn?

When proposed at the society's annual meeting, the Springfield community enthusiastically stepped forward. Susan and Keith Cutting of Cutting Farm offered to harvest their pine for the siding. Bruno Minard offered to saw the logs into planks at his local sawmill, while Twin Lake Village offered to down some of their huge hemlocks for the beams. Local contractor Kevin Roberts offered to bring in his heavy construction equipment to excavate, and Mike Tully was ready to lay the foundation.

With volunteers lining up, we needed drawings. Groups gathered to brainstorm what the barn should look like. Besides showcasing Springfield's agricultural heritage, everyone agreed adding a cupola would highlight Springfield's maple sugaring industry – today Springfield boasts





at least seven sugar houses. Architect Frank Anzalone of New London turned the sketches into a blueprint, maximizing display space filled with natural light and meeting public building regulations. And the barn was kept simple – no electricity, heat or plumbing. Naming it was also kept simple: “The Tool Shed.”

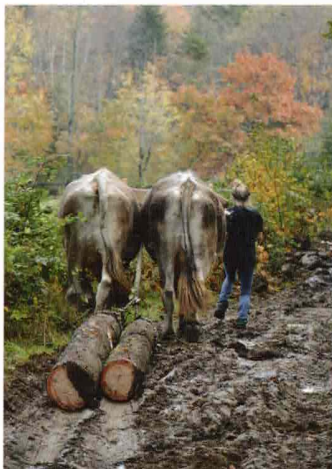
Fundraising brought in generous donations, including concrete from Carroll Concrete, roofing and windows from LaValley Building Supply, hardware from Belletetes, and monetary contributions that helped us exceed our goal.

In late-fall 2021, a crowd of onlookers watched teams of oxen and horses slog through some pretty deep mud to pull out huge, beautiful pine logs from the Cutting Farm’s forest on Sanborn Hill. Just down the road, Minard transformed the logs into boards, and stacked and covered them to season over the winter. In early spring 2022, Twin Lake Village downed the hemlocks and sawed them into massive beams. All the wood was ready!

In February 2022, a standing-room-only meeting enticed 21 volunteers to sign up. Two months later, master carpenter and project manager Chris Gaherty put the team to work, making the framework for the concrete floor and posts so Carroll could pour eight yards of concrete.

Over the next four months, a group of dedicated volunteers gathered almost every Saturday morning to “raise the barn.” Retired master carpenter Paul Seyfried expertly cut and nailed pine siding and became the door maker, spending hours making them fit just right. Others, like Bill Ellis, Jared LaBelle, and Gaherty, did the heavy lifting for the window installations and roofing.

We watched as the beams were hoisted into place and the carpenters skillfully framed the cupola. The Tool Shed was becoming a



The Springfield Historical Museum (former Center School) is located at 43 Four Corners Road, Springfield, NH. The museum buildings are open to visitors on weekends from Memorial Day to Columbus Day. Visit us from 1 to 3 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays, and check our online calendar for special events. www.historicalspringfieldnh.org

View videos of the barn raising at: historicalspringfieldnh.org/voices-of-springfield/

reality. And it brought the community together – either to nail the boards in place, to hand the next board up to the carpenter balancing on the rafters, or to simply stop by to gaze at the structure taking shape. The final nails were pounded in place in August, 22 months after Porter’s inspirational talk.

There’s the famous TV line, “I love when a plan comes together,” which seems to fit this project well. The barnraising became more than a building, bringing out Springfield’s best in community spirit after its pandemic hibernation. The Springfield Garden Club intends to plant old-fashioned flower beds this year, and future plans include a path with engraved bricks leading from the museum to The Tool Shed.

We look forward to gathering special tools from Springfield’s barns, sheds, and sugar houses to fill The Tool Shed, with a grand opening scheduled for June. Come and enjoy Springfield’s heritage! **E**

Jim Bednar is president of the Springfield Historical Society’s Board of Directors. Eastman resident Bonnie J. Fladung is a member of the SHS Board of Directors.